

Creating Communities of Practice

among Librarians in an Online Learning Environment

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What is a Community of Practice?

A community of practice (CoP) is defined as a “group of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis” (Wenger, McDermott, & Synder, 2002).

Benefits for Librarians

A **common challenge** with busy librarians is finding a time to physically meet and share/create new knowledge.

Online Communities of Practice can provide several **benefits**:



Flexibility in accessing information



Quickly adapting to individual needs



Sharing resources



Providing diverse perspectives

CoPs for Librarians

We will be using our **Learning Management System** (LMS) to create our CoPs. Most of our librarians are somewhat familiar with our LMS and the CoPs will be embedded within a mini-course for librarians. By using tools such as collaborations and discussion boards, we will be encouraging the sharing of resources.

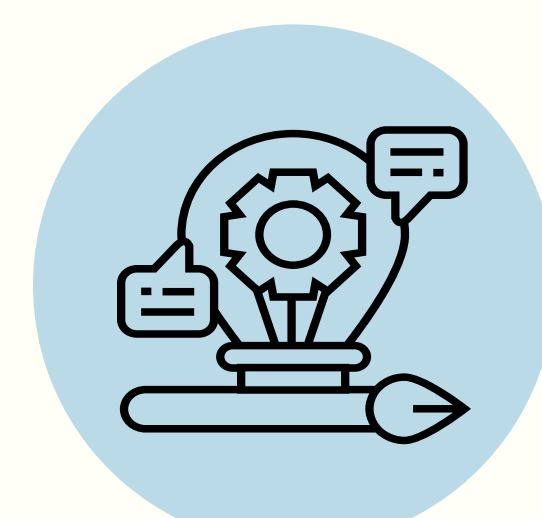
Initial topics will include:



meaningful and measurable objectives



learner-centered instructional strategies



formative assessments that drive instructional practice



inclusive teaching practices that create positive learning environments

Librarians will not be required to join a specific CoP and will have the ability to add CoPs as they desire. They will be encouraged to **share ideas, strategies, and tools** and engage in discussion with others in the community.

Designing Your Own CoPs

Most CoPs have no formal design or organization. However, there are actions you can take **to help sustain and improve the effectiveness** of CoPs.

Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002) have identified seven key design principles that you can use in managing your own CoPs.

1

Evolution

Able to evolve and shift over time but remaining focused on the topic

4

Public & Private

Individual and group activities that are private & ones that are public

2

Dialogue

Encourage new perspectives from within and outside of the CoP

5

Value

Attempts to identify contributions that the community values most

3

Participation

Encourage different levels of participation - active to observers

6

Familiarly & Excitement

Sharing common concerns & perspectives but also radical ones

7

Rhythm

Regular schedule of activities or focal points to bring participants together